Bodies of three children 'killed' by mother recovered in AJK

MUZAFFARABAD: A joint team of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Punjab police on Wednesday recovered the bodies of three minor children from a village in Bhimber district, nearly two weeks after they were allegedly murdered and buried by their mother and her paramour, police said.

DSP Bhimber Rashid Habib Masoodi told Dawn by telephone that the case came to light after the children's father, Rizwan Iqbal, lodged an FIR at the Saddar police station in Sarai Alamgir, Gujrat district, on Dec 21.

The complainant stated that his 26-year-old wife, Sidra Shabbir, who had been in contact with an unknown person through social media, left home on Dec 19 along with their three children — aged between two and seven — for Sarai Alamgir but did not return.

According to the FIR, a copy of which was available with Dawn, the complainant said he searched for his wife and children among relatives but failed to trace them, and while alleging that an unknown suspect had abducted his wife for immoral purposes, sought their recovery.

Sarai Alamgir police traced and recovered the woman from Kas Chanatar village in AJK's Bhimber district. On the basis of information obtained from her, her local paramour, identified as Babar, was also arrested.

During interrogation, police said, the woman and her accomplice confessed to having murdered the three children on Dec 19 and burying their bodies near a local stream. — Tariq Naqash

Floods, heatwaves shaped climate response in 2025

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Confronted with recurring floods, prolonged heatwaves, and mounting water stress, Pakistan intensified its climate resilience efforts in 2025, with the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination outlining a series of policy measures, response initiatives, and international engagements aimed at strengthening long-term preparedness.

Briefing on year-end developments, the ministry's spokesperson, Mohammad Saleem Shaikh, said that climate resilience and disaster preparedness dominated policymaking during the year, as extreme weather events again exposed the country's vulnerability to climate change.

He added that, on the prime minister's directives, a 300-day national climate preparedness and resilience plan was launched to improve coordination between federal and provincial authorities ahead of future monsoon seasons.

The plan focused on strengthening early warning systems, flood mitigation measures and the restoration of infrastructure repeatedly damaged by climate shocks.

Saleem Shaikh noted that severe and prolonged heat waves affected Sindh, Balochistan and parts of southern Punjab, prompting calls for integrated heat adaptation strategies.

These included public health advisories, emergency water supply arrangements and the establishment of cooling centres in high-risk areas.

He stressed that rising temperatures must now be treated as a structural reality, requiring changes in urban planning, public health systems and labour protections.

On the policy front, the ministry approved Pakistan's third carbon credit initiative under Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement.

The Safe Drinking Water Programme in Punjab, developed with the Punjab Saaf Pani Authority and a South Korean firm, aimed to attract foreign investment while reducing emissions through expanded access to clean water.

VEHICLES queue up on Islamabad Expressway to get their M-Tags at the Kachnar Park registration centre in I-8 sector on Wednesday. — White Star

Rawal Dam to cut water supply by 50pc to Rawalpindi

Dam's canals will be repaired, cleaned from Jan 1 to 11

By Aamir Yasin

RAWALPINDI: Water supply from Rawal Dam to the garrison city will be curtailed by 50 per cent for 11 days starting January 1, as the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) prepares to begin water rationing in areas fed by the dam.

Wasa Managing Director Saleem Ashraf said that, in view of the thorough cleaning and repair of Rawal Dam canals, water supply from the dam will remain reduced by 50 per cent from January 1 to January 11.

Areas including Committee Chowk, Raja Bazaar, Purana Qila, Mohanpura, Bagh Sardaran, Dhoke Mangtal, Arya Mohalla and other localities will be affected. However, water supply from Khanpur Dam and tube wells in these areas will continue as usual.

According to a joint meeting of the Small Dam Organisation and Wasa administration, the Small Dam Organisation's plan for the repair and cleaning of the main canal, right bank canal and left bank canal originating from Rawal Dam has been approved.

Under the plan, the main canal will be repaired and cleaned from January 1 to January 3, while the right and left bank canals will undergo cleaning and repair from January 3 to January 11. As a result, the supply of raw water from Rawal Dam to Wasa will remain affected by 50 per cent.

During this period, he said, there may be a reduction in water supply and partial shortages in different areas of the city.

"Wasa Rawalpindi is making alternative arrangements to deal with this possible situation, under which every possible effort will be made to provide additional water to citizens through Khanpur Dam, tube wells and water bowsers.

The supply of clean drinking water will also be ensured through Wasa's mini filtration plants across the city," he added.

He emphasised that public cooperation is essential during this period. Wasa Rawalpindi has strongly appealed to citizens to use water carefully and responsibly and to avoid using water for washing floors, vehicles, motorcycles, lawns and gardens in homes, shops and plazas.

Citizens were also urged not to leave taps open inside their houses and to practice frugality in water use.

The Wasa managing director has instructed water supply officers and staff to ensure an uninterrupted water supply from alternative sources, including Khanpur Dam and tube wells, during the Rawal Dam water cut.

He also directed the urgent repair of tube wells and immediate redressal of consumer complaints, warning that strict action will be taken against consumers found wasting water.

Appealing once again to the public, he asked citizens to use available water only for drinking, cooking and other essential domestic needs so that fair distribution can be ensured in all areas.

He further said that the concerned agencies would make every effort to complete the cleaning and maintenance work of Rawal Dam canals within the prescribed schedule so that water supply from the dam can be restored to normal after January 11.

M-Tag installation deadline extended by 15 days

ISLAMABAD: The deadline for the installation of M-Tags on vehicles has been extended by 15 days in the federal capital.

Speaking at the newly built Shaheen Chowk underpass, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that the state minister for interior, whom he described as an "awami minister," had requested a 15-day extension.

Mr Naqvi also said that the Smart City Project would be completed in 2026. Under the project, citizen services such as Rescue 1122, traffic management, security and services related to the Capital Development Authority (CDA) would be integrated into a centralised system.

Earlier, it had been announced that, to ensure the security of the federal capital, vehicles without M-Tags would not be allowed to enter Islamabad from January 1.

According to the ICT administration, 16 M-Tag facilitation points have been established at various locations across the city.

Since November 14, nearly 100,000 vehicles had been issued M-Tags by December 29.

An official said that after January 15, vehicles without M-Tags would be identified with the help of tag readers, which have been installed at various entry points and checkpoints.

Earlier this year, the National Highways Authority (NHA) decided to encourage motorists to obtain M-Tags and announced a 25 per cent extra charge for vehicles without M-Tags on motorways. An M-Tag is a prepaid sticker that allows motorists to skip queues, use designated fast lanes, and enjoy a cashless tolling system on motorways.

The same technology is now being used in the federal capital to identify vehicles and ensure security. Each vehicle owner is being charged Rs250 for the issuance of an M-Tag.

During his media talk on Wednesday, the interior minister said that the Safe City Project would also be completed in 2026.

A few days earlier, Mr Naqvi had visited the Safe City headquarters, where he observed public safety measures implemented through modern technology and inspected security surveillance at the Special Chinese Desk in the control room.

Mohsin Naqvi said that the scope and outreach of the Capital Smart City project would be expanded across the country and adopted as a model to make Islamabad the safest city. He emphasised that reforms in Safe City operations and the effective use of technology are the need of the hour. — Staff Reporter

Quality education, innovation roadmap unveiled for Islamabad schools, colleges

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Education Minister Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has launched FDE quality education and innovation roadmap for Islamabad schools and colleges.

According to a press release issued by education ministry on Wednesday, Secretary Education Nadeem Mahbub, Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), Director General Syed Junaid Akhlaq and senior officials from the FDE and the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) were also present at the launching ceremony.

The FDE is regulatory body of over 430 schools and colleges and this five year roadmap, according to ministry, will be implemented in all schools and colleges. According to education ministry, FDE framework was developed aimed at elevating educational standards across schools and colleges in the Islamabad in five years.

"Anchored in national priorities such as the National Education Policy Development Framework (NEPDF 2024) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), the roadmap emphasizes practical interventions to attain students learning outcomes, digital transformation, enabling environment, governance, infrastructure, and professional development," read a working paper.

"The roadmap is anchored by five interlinked pillars designed to address systemic deficits in learning outcomes and governance: Pillar 1: Digital and Innovative Learning: Focuses on embedding EdTech into classrooms and ensuring 100% of teachers are trained to use digital tools effectively by 2030.

Pillar 2: Policy Review and Governance: Aims to fill leadership gaps, institutionalise accountability, and establish a Policy & Planning Cell for continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Pillar 3: Enabling Environment and Resource Equity: Mandates a phased plan to upgrade physical infrastructure (clean water, washrooms) and achieve national student-teacher ratio standards (30:1 for primary).

Pillar 4: Attainment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): Prioritizes a revised Scheme of Studies that integrates 21st-century life skills, Technical and vocational Education/training, and holistic learner development. Pillar 5: Professional Development Framework: Transitions from fragmented training to a sustained Continuous Professional Development (CPD) model focused on subject mastery and modern pedagogy," read the working paper.

It said that under this initiative, FDE want completion of comprehensive facility audits for all institutions by 2027 and resolving 100pc of high-priority infrastructure gaps by 2023. "Filling 80pc of sanctioned leadership posts by 2027 to institutionalize adaptive planning, achieve 100pc compliance with students teacher ratio standards and full curriculum alignment with digital resources by 2030," read working paper, which added that scaling the foundation literacy and numeracy and differentiated instruction to ensure all Grade 5 students meet grade-level literacy and numeracy standards.

It said that this roadmap is a strategic imperative to bridge the gap between school enrolment and actual learning mastery.

By leveraging ICT's unique centralized governance and its status as the top-performing district in Pakistan, this framework provides a replicable model for national excellence."

According to roadmap success hinges "on transitioning from ad-hoc initiatives to a coherent, outcome-based system where every child has the opportunity to thrive in a safe, technologically advanced and inclusive learning environment.

More development projects planned for Islamabad in 2026: minister

Shaheen Chowk underpass opened as CDA completes 18 projects in 2025

By Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: The Shaheen Chowk underpass has been opened for traffic as the Capital Development Authority (CDA) completed 18 projects, including five mega road projects, during the year 2025.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded the opening of the underpass on Wednesday, the last day of the year.

He said the project's formal inauguration would be carried out by the prime minister, but it was being opened as part of New Year celebrations.

The minister said a large number of new projects will be launched in Islamabad in 2026.

In his media talk, the minister said the Serena Interchange, Murree Road underpass, F-8 Interchange, T Chowk flyover and Shaheen Chowk, along with the completion of Park Road and the Business Facilitation Centre projects, were among the "dozens" of projects completed during 2025.

He congratulated the CDA team, contractors and interior ministry officials for completing the project.

The interior minister said Vision 2027 for Islamabad, a two-year development programme, will be unveiled in January, under which special focus will be given to enhancing greenery and overhauling parks. He said 2026 will see the completion of double the number of development projects compared to those completed in the outgoing year. He added that work was continuing on the jail project. State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry was also present on the occasion.

Mr Naqvi appreciated the state minister for interior, CDA chairman, IG Islamabad, secretary interior and other concerned officials for working as a team to complete development projects in 2025.

In the outgoing year, the CDA, besides the mentioned road projects, completed a number of projects at a total cost of Rs 15 billion. "We completed 18 projects worth Rs 15 billion in 2025, and in 2026 the number of projects will be doubled," the interior minister said.

The underpass has been constructed on Khayaban-i-Iqbal, commonly known as Margalla Road, at the junction of 9th Avenue, where motorists faced traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours.

WORKERS install lights on a globe at Shaheen Chowk underpass before its inauguration in Islamabad on Wednesday. — Photo by Mohammad Asim

The foundation stone of the underpass project, worth Rs 1.3 billion, was laid by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on October 24 and it was to be completed in 150 days. However, the project was completed in 63 days.

The cost of the project saw a 15 per cent increase as the length of the underpass barrel was increased from 56 metres to 85 metres, and some other design changes were also made.

During the media talk, the minister said that under Vision 2027, Islamabad will be given a new look with enhanced greenery. Responding to a query, he said that in 2026 he has four main goals: beautification work, entertainment, greenery and ending what he described as the dull feeling of Islamabad.

He said that top restaurant chains would open outlets in the capital, adding that teams had visited Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and other cities to invite leading chains to Islamabad. He also said that a new convention centre and expo centre would be set up in the city next year.

Mr Naqvi said every effort was made to save trees and, gesturing towards a tree, said that to avoid cutting it, the road alignment was slightly changed. He said that wherever a tree is cut, 100 plants are planted as replacement. He also announced that the cricket stadium project would soon be started in Islamabad.

Responding to a query about the demolition of slums, the minister said action was taken only against those who encroached upon state land, adding that action would also be taken against government officials who facilitated the construction of houses on state land.